

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Monica Torrijos , I am a Student from Manchester

I stand in support of S.B. 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we need. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

I am an undocumented student at UCONN's Graduate School of Business and I care about this issue because it has affected me and my community greatly.

I can tell you the many stories I have heard from others and their inability to access healthcare, such as losing a child because they were denied treatment, but those are their stories to share. Today, I am here to share mine, the story of an undocumented little girl who did not have access to healthcare until she became an adult. I came to the United States as an 8-year-old, and while I had no major health concerns or conditions my parents rarely took me to the doctor, the dentist, or the optometrist. I got a lot of ear infections as a child, and because of our immigration status coupled with being low income, this meant that they were treated at home. I had apple cider vinegar droplets placed in my ear or even have smoke being blown into my ear, all to avoid the doctor due to the high cost and the unwillingness to treat undocumented people like me. When I was in the fifth grade, I was finally taken to the optometrist for the first time because I could not see the board at school. My eyesight was getting so bad it was interfering with my grades and learning. My parents took me to the optometrist at Walmart, which charged \$300 plus the glasses, this was a lot of money back then, and it's still a lot of money for families living below the poverty line. I was lucky enough to grow up relatively healthy. However, I did not have consistent healthcare until I became an adult and was able to pay for care out of pocket. Sometimes I had to pay over \$600+ a year for an eye exam plus regular glasses or contacts but never both as it was too much. Paying this amount meant saving throughout the year to ensure that I could do the most basic thing, see. It wasn't until last year that I finally went to the dentist, at the age of 27. I was afraid to go since I had not been since I was 8 years old, nearly 20 years ago. At the dentist, I discovered that I had 10 cavities! I also learned that not taking care of those cavities can result in grave health conditions later in life. I got all my cavities filled, it cost me more than \$360 after insurance, without it I would have a bill of over \$1,200. I am lucky enough to have a job that offers health insurance and where I can afford their health plan. I am also lucky enough to make enough money to cover those out-of-pocket costs. However, not everyone is as lucky as I am.

This bill would have helped me as a kid, a teen, and a young adult and I can see how it can help my community and the state. From an economic standpoint, it would decrease emergency room care costs, as many people in my situation only seek services once their health has worsened or it's too late. Access to health insurance would also increase preventative care, therefore also decreasing the overall cost of surgeries or other costly procedures. Allowing folks to have access to health insurance is not only the smart thing to do, but it is the moral thing to do by allowing parents to see their children grow up healthy and allowing adult children to see their elderly parents get the treatment they need to continue living.

I support S.B. 284 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,

Monica Torrijos

they need to continue living.